

Benchmark Ia.3.3: Through quarters 2 through 8, Permanency Workgroup provides ongoing consultation to DCF with recommendations regarding case review system policy, law, and practice improvements.

Evidence of Completion: Summary report of recommendations received

The Permanency Workgroup met quarterly to review policy, law, and practice, and to make recommendations for needed change to improve permanency outcomes. The meetings have been very useful for gaining feedback from the court system regarding the topics specifically identified in the PIP as well as other topics affecting permanency for children. Recommendations and input from these meetings have already affected developing policy and legislation. Other feedback will be taken into consideration as the Division of Safety and Permanence plans initiatives, legislative changes, or policy direction moving forward.

This summary provides the general feedback gained from the group, as well as specific recommendations for action:

Topic Area	Feedback and Recommendations	Implementation
Subsidized Guardianship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The enacted legislation and draft implementation policy were reviewed. The Workgroup provided comments on the draft policy, and discussed both the benefits of subsidized guardianship for improving permanency outcomes, as well as concerns of local agencies that may need to be addressed. <p>Other comments/suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The need for judicial, legal, social work, and caregiver training for successful implementation• The importance of engaging foster parents in the reunification process• Concerns counties might have regarding implementation, such as the risks involved with closing a case with no absolute assurances for safety• Training for counties needs to explain when the use of SG is appropriate (when adoption and reunification are truly ruled out)• Counties should be reminded of the long-term financial benefits for the county as a whole (e.g. avoiding future out-of-home placements, better overall social outcomes for children who will not need public service benefits, etc.)	Recommendations were incorporated into the development of the department's Subsidized Guardianship policy and training. This input will also be used to inform resources being developed for the District Trainings to be held in the fall of 2012.

Concurrent Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This topic was discussed during three separate meetings. The first focused on general concepts and the sharing of experiences in various jurisdictions. The second meeting included a presentation from Gary Mallon, Executive Director of the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections, who presented the core components of concurrent planning, as well as national best practice standards. The third meeting looked at specific legislative drafting instructions. • Feedback was shared regarding the level of statutory direction needed to fully implement the use of concurrent planning. This varied by jurisdiction. Workgroup consensus directed that legislation at least include a codified definition of concurrent planning. • Detailed discussion regarding the difference between a “plan” and a “goal” led to the recommendation that statutory language be changed so that permanency is always the goal, and that there be two concurrent plans to reach that same goal (see Implementation comment). • Robust discussion addressed the differences between sequential versus concurrent planning, and the concept of planning with simultaneous efforts. • Question of whether reasonable efforts findings must be made on both plans was raised (this question was later brought to federal level for consultation). • Concerns were raised that the inclusion of the concurrent planning standards in statute could be too prescriptive and not allow for judicial flexibility needed to successfully implement concurrent planning policies. • Specific editing was done during the Workgroup meeting to create drafting instructions for the definition of concurrent planning. • Options for statutory language were proposed which would better ensure that courts review and, when appropriate, approve a concurrent plan. This included some discussion around making concurrent planning 	<p>Recommendation for changing terminology regarding plan and goal was discussed with national experts and federal representatives. This recommendation was revisited at the next meeting and it was decided that pursuing the language change was not advisable at this time.</p> <p>Feedback was incorporated into final drafting instructions for legislation.</p>
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	<p>mandatory by statute in certain cases.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Options for statutory language to require the agency to pursue concurrent goals with equal vigor were discussed (the group discussed the pros and cons of such language). The importance of training for judicial, legal, and child welfare agencies was emphasized for successful implementation. 	
Permanency for Adolescents in Foster Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under the state's Three Branch Institute Project (administered through an NGA grant), the Permanency Workgroup discussed legal barriers to permanency for older youth. The Workgroup's feedback was incorporated into the qualitative data as documented in Attachment C of the NGA project Summary Report and Strategic Plan: http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/children/foster/nga/pdf/summary_report.pdf 	<p>This feedback was analyzed by the NGA Project Home Team and prioritized to develop the state's Strategic Plan (page 4 of the Summary Report: http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/children/foster/nga/pdf/summary_report.pdf)</p>
Child Welfare Ongoing Services Standards and Integrated Case Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the meeting on September 15, 2011, DCF staff presented draft revisions of the Standards and discussed plans for implementation of an integrated case plan. Comments and Feedback: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The relevance of a court report when similar information is included in the Permanency Plan was discussed. It was suggested that the Permanency Plan include information required in the court report in order to eliminate duplication. Would like to see the 6 month snapshots of progress remain in the plans so the development of the history of the case remains Would like to see the "why CW agencies are involved and safety issues" sooner in the plans, feel the current PP provides too much demographic information at the first page and must look several pages in before getting to the necessary information for a review. Would like some type of index in front that says what portions are on which page of the document to ease location of information during hearings/review of the 	<p>These recommendations were taken into consideration for revision of Ongoing Services Standards and development of the Integrated Case Plan.</p> <p>Recommendations will be taken into consideration for implementation and training and for future development of the Integrated Case Plan.</p>

	<p>document.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Currently there is too much cutting and pasting and often times it does not make sense in the document. ▪ Would like the history and findings to read more like a story to tell us where we are at today. ▪ Would like to receive documents via email. ▪ Current document is too long and too redundant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the meeting on March 23, 2012, the following future revisions of the Integrated Case Plan were discussed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Would like to see narrative information regarding who the siblings are and where they are located in the permanency plan ▪ A glossary with agency terms of art should be developed for judges (and would probably be helpful to agency staff as well). ▪ CANS (and any other acronyms in the plan) should be spelled out ▪ A template of the plan showing every option should be provided to all judges as a reference 	
Change of Placement Statutory Amendments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Workgroup discussed this topic during two meetings. In the first, current problems with change of placement procedures were discussed. In the second meeting, the Workgroup reviewed specific legislative drafting instructions that incorporated their input from the first meeting. The Workgroup provided further recommendations for amending the language in the drafting instructions, in order to clarify and improve consistency in change of placement procedures statewide. 	The recommendations were incorporated into a legislative proposal that may be pursued in the next (2013-14) legislative session.
Quality and Effectiveness of Permanency Plan Hearings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Krista Thomas of the Children's Bureau presented on Wisconsin's and other states' performance in this CFSR area, as well as conclusions regarding the effectiveness of Permanency Plan Hearings that can be drawn from indicators identified in those reviews. Melissa Bahmer, Senior Program Manager of the National Council of 	Recommendations will be incorporated into department's future policy and training development.

	<p>Juvenile and Family Court Judges, and Judge Stephen Rubin of Arizona presented on the key principles for permanency planning and the Resource Guidelines related to effective permanency hearings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The format of permanency plan reports can be a barrier to quality – e.g. the pertinent information is buried deep in the report. • Judges discussed different methods they use to engage families • Differences in quality between permanency panels and permanency hearings were discussed. There was consensus that one is not necessarily superior, but that quality varies by jurisdiction. • Length of hearing/panel and membership of review panel affects quality. • Training panel members is critical to improving quality of reviews. 	
Trial Reunification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current state policy, federal guidance, and implementation in local Wisconsin jurisdictions were discussed. • Potential statutory changes to support the use of trial reunification were discussed. • Suggestions were made regarding the appropriate length of time for a trial reunification. • Suggestions were made that perhaps trial reunifications should only be allowed under certain circumstances, or that the number of trial reunifications requested should be limited. • Using similar procedures as exist under the change of placement procedures was discussed. • Best interest standard was suggested as an appropriate standard for determining appropriateness of trial reunification. • Drafting instructions for legislative proposals were reviewed and further amendments were made. 	<p>Feedback was incorporated into final drafting instructions for legislation.</p> <p>Recommendations will be incorporated into revision of the department's trial reunification policy, which is necessary to conform to new statutory requirements.</p>

Notification to Caregivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was agreement that, generally, providing adequate and timely notice to caregivers is not a problem (with some exceptions in certain jurisdictions), and that recommendations for change should focus on caregiver engagement. • Suggestion was made that more jurisdictions offer the opportunity for the caregiver to appear by phone. • The Workgroup identified as best practice the judge thanking caregivers for their work and for attending the hearing. • Specific recommendations and language changes were provided regarding the DCF form for caregivers providing information to the court. Concern was expressed that the form is leading to confusion about whether foster parents are allowed the opportunity to make a verbal statement in court. Recommendations focused on language and format changes which would better encourage caregiver participation in court hearings. It was also recommended that once the form is amended, its use should be strongly encouraged in every county. • Training should be provided to foster care coordinators and judges so that there is improved caregiver participation. • Information regarding contacting the court to appear by phone should be added to the Notice of Permanency Plan Hearing court form. 	<p>DCF will use these recommendations to amend the DCF form “Guide for Foster Parents and Other Physical Custodians to Provide Information at Court Proceedings.” Efforts will also be made to encourage greater use of the form once it is finalized.</p> <p>Other recommendations will be incorporated into department’s future policy and training development.</p>
Child Participation in Permanency Hearings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to find better ways to engage youth even if they say they don’t want to come to court. Sometimes with further inquiry it is found that they would like to attend, but fear/anxiety or other reasons may be preventing them from doing so. • Andrea Khoury, Project Director for the Bar-Youth Project presented information on the judicial bench cards published by the American Bar Association and their usefulness in practice was discussed. • The Workgroup asked that further research on young 	<p>Further guidance on young children attending court hearings will be brought to the June meeting for further discussion.</p> <p>The youth participation form will also be brought to the June meeting in the hopes that it can be distributed widely to encourage youth participation in court hearings.</p> <p>Future meetings will identify other program or practice changes that can be made to incorporate these recommendations.</p>

	<p>children attending court hearings be brought to the June meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology like Skype should be utilized more often so that children can attend hearings. This would especially be helpful if Skype could be set up at school (like a guidance counselor's office) so that a child could attend hearings with minimal interference with school. • A suggestion was made that Instant Messaging could also be used as a tool for communication with the Court • There should be specific policy and training to adequately prepare children for attending hearings. • The Workgroup would like to review a youth participation form that was developed but never issued due to confidentiality/due process concerns. 	
Practice and Training Resource Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input was provided on the development of the judicial District Trainings, especially regarding a greater emphasis on the importance of timely permanence in light of childhood development and the perspective of the child's experience. • A judicial checklist is being developed for the District Trainings and will be reviewed for feedback at the June meeting. • In collaboration with Casey Family Programs, a video with foster youth is being created for the judicial district trainings. Input and recommendations from the Permanency Workgroup is being incorporated into the development of this resource tool. (Recommendations to date include emphasis on timely permanence and childhood development.) 	Implementation will be completed by the end of Quarter 8.